

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

USMISSION GENEVA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USMISSION USUN

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TAGS: PFOR, UR, US, XF

SUBJECT: SOVIET PRESS ON MIDDLE EAST

GENEVA FOR MEPC DEL

1. SUMMARY. SOVIET PRESS (MARCH 25) AGAIN AVOIDS DIRECT COMMENT ON THE BREAKDOWN OF EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI NEGOTIATIONS. COVERAGE FOCUSES ON THE ALLEGED GROUND SWELL OF WORLD OPINION FAVORING RESUMPTION OF THE GENEVA CONFERENCE. FAILURE OF THE SECRETARY'S MISSION IS CAST--CITING FOREIGN SOURCES--AS SEALING THE FATE OF STEP-BY-STEP DIPLOMACY AND A MAJOR FAILURE FOR U.S. ME POLICY. IZVESTIYA (MARCH 24) MISQUOTES THE SECRETARY'S JERUSALEM DEPARTURE

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STATEMENT SAYING HE CALLED COLLAPSE OF EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI

TALKS "A SAD DAY FOR AMERICAN DIPLOMACY." END SUMMARY.

2. WASHINGTON-DATELINED TASS STORY (PRAVDA) REPORTS SECRETARY'S MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT AFTER HIS RETURN FROM JERUSALEM. TASS QUOTES THE PRESIDENT AS EXPRESSING REGRET THAT THE SECRETARY'S MISSION DID NOT SUCCEED AND HIS REMARK THAT "FACTORS BEYOND U.S. CONTROL" INFLUENCED THE OUTCOME OF THE MIDDLE EAST MISSION. SECRETARY IS QUOTED AS SAYING THE U.S. IS READY, AS BEFORE, TO COOPERATE WITH THE PARTIES TO THE ME CONFLICT AND WITH "ALL OTHER INTERESTED COUNTRIES." IZVESTIYA CORRESPONDENT KORYAVIN (MARCH 24) CITES ARAB SOURCES AS SAYING THE STEP-BY-STEP SETTLEMENT "CANNOT BE CONSIDERED AN EFFECTIVE MEANS" TO ACHIEVE A ME PEACE. HE ALSO SAYS SECRETARY ON DEPARTURE FROM JERUSALEM CALLED THE END OF HIS MISSION "A SAD DAY FOR AMERICAN DIPLOMACY."

3. OTHER REPORTS STRESS GROWING SUPPORT FOR RESUMPTION OF THE GENEVA CONFERENCE FROM ARAB AND WESTERN SOURCES. CAIRO-DATELINED TASS ITEM (PRAVDA) REPORTS THAT THE MEETING IN CAIRO OF ARAB LEAGUE FOREIGN MINISTERS IS DISCUSSING THE MIDDLE EAST SITUATION IN THE LIGHT OF THE SECRETARY'S FAILURE. IT IS NOTED, TASS STRESSES, THAT THE CONFERENCE WILL PROVIDE THE REPRESENTATIVES OF EGYPT, JORDAN, SYRIA AND THE PLO WITH AN OPPORTUNITY TO "EXCHANGE OPINIONS ABOUT THE RENEWAL OF THE GENEVA CONFERENCE." SEPARATE TASS WORLD PRESS ROUNDUP CITES LONDON TIMES AND WASHINGTON POST VIEW THAT FAILURE OF THE SECRETARY'S NEGOTIATING EFFORTS NOW APPEARS TO MAKE RETURN TO GENEVA THE INEVITABLE ALTERNATIVE.

4. PRAVDA CORRESPONDENT OREKHOV, IN SPECIAL REPORT ON ARAB REACTION TO THE COLLAPSE OF EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI TALKS, STATES THAT ARAB OFFICIALS AND PRESS ARE STATING THAT THE FAILURE OF "CERTAIN CIRCLES" TO SUBSTITUTE PARTIAL MEASURES FOR A GENERAL SETTLEMENT AGAIN UNDERSCORES THE NEED TO RESUME THE MEPC QUICKLY. OREKHOV ALSO REPLAYS SYRIAN PRESS STATEMENT THAT ONLY BASIS FOR ME PEACE REMAINS TOTAL ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL AND RESTORATION OF PALESTINIAN RIGHTS.

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5. COMMENT: SOVIET PUBLIC STANCE SO FAR INDICATES THAT MOSCOW IS CLEARLY PLEASED AT THE APPARENT GROWTH IN SUPPORT FOR GENEVA FOLLOWING THE COLLAPSE OF THE SECRETARY'S ME MISSION. ABSENCE OF DIRECT COMMENT, HOWEVER, SUGGESTS THAT THE SOVIETS ARE STILL UNCERTAIN ABOUT JUST HOW STRONG THE SUPPORT FOR GENEVA HAS BECOME, AND WE SUSPECT THE SOVIETS ARE RELUCTANT TO GET OUT IN FRONT OF THE ARABS IN PRESSING FOR

A RETURN TO THE MEPC. IN THIS REGARD, WE NOTE THAT THE SOVIET-
FRENCH COMMUNIQUE (SEPTEL), IN LANGUAGE UNCHANGED
FROM THAT INCLUDED IN THE COMMUNIQUE AFTER BREZHNEV'S
MEETING WITH GISCARD, DOES NOT GO BEYOND EXPRESSING
"THE HOPE THAT THE GENEVA CONFERENCE WILL BE RECONVENED
AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE." IN ADDITION, ALTHOUGH WE DO
NOT YET HAVE A FULL READOUT ON THE FRENCH-SOVIET
TALKS, OUR IMPRESSION FROM PRELIMINARY DISCUSSION WITH
THE FRENCH HERE IS THAT SOVIETS DID NOT PRESS FRECH
ON THIS ISSUE.
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